

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Amend claims 1, 9 and 10 as shown below.

1. (currently amended) In combination, a large kitchen or barbecue fork and a guard for manipulating, lifting and turning food and as an adjunct in slicing meats, said combination comprising: a handle, a slender elongated shank attached at one end portion thereof to said handle, a forked end portion attached to an opposite end portion of said shank, said forked end portion having at least one pair of sharp pointed tines; and a guard, said guard having a cover portion for preventing injuries and contamination when said barbecue fork is not in use by covering said sharp pointed tines; and a means for selectively retaining said guard in covering relationship to said sharp pointed tines when said barbecue fork is not in use and in uncovering relationship to said sharp pointed tines when said barbecue fork is used for manipulating, lifting and turning food or slicing meats.

2. (original) The combination recited in claim 1 wherein said means for selectively retaining said guard in covering relationship to said sharp pointed tines and in uncovering relationship to said sharp pointed tines comprises: a steel collar adjacent to said forked

end portion; a steel collar attached to an end portion of said handle; and a magnet in an end portion of said guard for cooperating with said steel collar on said shank to retain said guard in covering relationship to said sharp pointed tines and for cooperating with said steel collar on said handle to retain said guard in uncovering relationship to said sharp pointed tines.

3. (original) The combination recited in claim 1 wherein said means for selectively retaining said guard in covering relationship to said sharp pointed tines and in uncovering relationship to said sharp pointed tines comprises: a hub portion of said guard which is in close fitting relationship with said shank to selectively retain said guard by friction in covering relationship to said sharp pointed tines and to selectively retain by friction said guard in uncovering relationship to said sharp pointed tines.

4. (original) The combination recited in claim 1 wherein said guard is made of a flexible material.

5. (original) The combination recited in claim 1 wherein said guard is coated with a non-stick fire resistant material.

6. (original) The combination recited in claim 1 wherein said guard is made of a woven ceramic material.

7. (original) The combination recited in claim 1 wherein said guard is made of a silica cloth.

8. (original) The combination recited in claim 1 wherein said guard is made of a rigid ceramic material.

9. (currently amended) In combination, a large kitchen or barbecue fork for manipulating, lifting and turning food and as an adjunct in slicing meats and a generally cylindrical elongated guard ~~for manipulating, lifting and turning food and as an adjunct in slicing meats,~~ said fork comprising: a handle, a elongated steel shank attached at one end portion thereof to said handle, a forked end portion attached to an opposite end portion of said shank, said forked end portion having at least one pair of sharp pointed tines; a steel collar on said shank adjacent to said forked end portion; a steel collar attached to an end portion of said handle; ~~a flexible guard,~~ said guard having a cover portion for preventing injuries and contamination by covering said sharp pointed tines of said fork and an adjoining hub portion; and a magnet in an end portion of said guard for

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cooperating with said steel collar on said shank to retain said guard in covering relationship to said sharp pointed tines when said fork is in use and for cooperating with said steel collar on said handle to retain said guard in uncovering relationship to said sharp pointed tines when said fork is not in use.

10. (currently amended) A method for preventing injury and food contamination from sharp pointed tines of a large kitchen or barbecue fork comprising the steps of ~~slidably~~ mounting a thin wall cylindrical guard on a slender elongated shank of said fork; ~~sliding~~ ~~retaining~~ said guard ~~in~~ on said shank to a position of covering relationship with said sharp pointed tines of said barbecue fork when said fork is not in use; and ~~retaining~~ ~~sliding~~ said guard ~~in~~ to a position of uncovering relationship with said sharp pointed tines of said barbecue fork when said fork is in use.

11. (original) The method recited in claim 10 wherein said guard is magnetically retained in said covering position when said fork is not in use and is magnetically retained in said uncovering position when said fork is in use.